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ABSTRACT

Many patterns are being suggested for modifying the higher education system in such a way that it will serve students not now being served or not adequately served. One approach to this issue is the "real student approach" which requires a careful examination of 2 factors and their interaction: (1) the presence of an identifiable group of students who are not now well served; and (2) the existence of continuing education programs and the characteristics of these programs that make them unsuitable for these particular students. Extension and continuing education programs have served 2 important functions of instruction and validation but not of certification (or recognition). This paper examines the problems Sergeant X faces. He is regular Army, plans to retire after 20 years, and would like to have knowledge necessary for a college job and a college degree. He accumulates "a whole bag of credits and almost credits" through extension and correspondence courses, but because of residency and curriculum requirements and differing quality standards he won't be able to get a degree. The traditional system could be modified in 4 areas: instruction, examination, transfer of credit, and certification to make acquiring a degree a simple matter. The quickest way to accomplish this is through the National University model. (AF)

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DEGREES FOR NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS

An Approach to New Models

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Since February 26, 1971, when the *A.C.E. Special Report* "External Degrees: An Initial Report" was sent to Council members, several programs referred to there have begun to take form. The State University of New York has named and partly described its new Empire State College for nonresident students; the nineteen institutions of the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities have begun planning their "University Without Walls" programs; the College Board's Commission on Non-Traditional Study has met and begun its work.

This *A.C.E. Special Report* is a staff paper prepared for the Council's Commission on Academic Affairs and its Committee on Higher Adult Education. A preliminary version was presented at the meeting of the National University Extension Association, Region III, held at the University of Virginia on March 18. The present version is sent to Council members, as was the earlier report, in the hope that it will be of help as they consider their institution's responses to the rapidly growing interest in nonresident and other unconventional degree programs. Readers who wish to contribute their views on the issues raised here are invited to correspond with the author.

Proposals for non-resident students, the external degree, and the open universities that would offer them were so popular at the [AAHE] conference that they ranked right alongside money problems and the general malaise in higher education as the principal topics of conversation here.

Chronicle of Higher Education, *March 22, 1971*

In the first three months of 1971, the higher education community has shown more unanimity than it has in several years as "open university" and "external degree" proposals have been prepared, publicized, and—some of them—funded. Institutions, state systems, consortia, state legislatures, as well as individual opinion-makers in the establishment, have joined in a rising chorus, the refrain of which is, "To serve is to be saved."

While the bandwagon rolls on, the Commission on Non-Traditional Study, a group sponsored by the College Entrance Examination Board and the Educational Testing Service and financed by the Carnegie Corporation, has been given the job of analyzing the issues and ultimately proposing one or more patterns for a modified higher education system that will serve students not now being served or not now being adequately served.

Although several ways of approaching the issues will have to be tried, one already at hand is the basis for this paper: the Real Student Approach. It requires a careful examination of

two factors and their interactions: the presence of identifiable groups of students who are not now well served, and the existence of continuing education programs originally established to take care of students for whom traditional residence programs were not satisfactory. This approach requires that we consider "unserved students" not as a single, very large group that can be defined adequately by their common characteristics, but rather that we identify for each subgroup those characteristics that make existing programs unsuitable. Similarly, our approach requires that we examine programs to discover what characteristics make them unsuitable for particular students.

An exhaustive study by this approach would require dealing with every conceivable student population as well as every kind of program: traditional, extension, and the new ones now being proposed. What follows here is a beginning only, limited to a particular student—the serviceman on active duty—in relation to existing and projected programs. Many, but not all, of the issues raised in this example would also have arisen if another student group had been selected (e.g., the mature woman, the academically unprepared 18-year-old, the college dropout). Further, the exercise suggests that a single model for educational programs (e.g., the National University or the University Without Walls) will not be the best solution for all groups of students.

THE EXTENSION OF EXTENSION?

There are some who look upon the new proposals as nothing more than modifications of the continuing education model. The fanfare that accompanied the announcement on February 16 of substantial Carnegie and Ford grants for the support of new "external degree" programs in New York State and elsewhere might have struck the dean of a college of general studies as the final irony for adult and continuing education. "What SUNY, Syracuse, the Board of Education, and the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities are planning," he might have said, "is just exactly what I've been struggling to get supported for lo these many, many years." And he might have gone on to say, "If they'd given me their support twenty years ago, they wouldn't have to be reinventing the wheel now with a whole new team."

Having got over his annoyance, however, he might be sorely tempted to come into his own by offering his tried and true answers to old questions others are beginning to ask. And if he does so aggressively, he is likely to bring on another and more severe bout of annoyance, because the continuing education model he offers does not seem any better response to what is happening than are the traditional liberal arts and professional models.

What is happening is that the higher education establishment is calling into question its formerly exclusive preoccupation with the full-time, degree-seeking, "serious" student, and discovering that its actual and potential clientele is far broader than its programs had allowed for.

By the "establishment," I refer to administrators and faculty of those institutions that serve as models of quality in higher education, and to their colleagues and counterparts in foundations, associations, and government. Most of what is looked upon with favor in higher education and supported best financially is what these establishment leaders themselves assume to be good. Other things get support, but usually it is not strong support.

Most of these people share some experiences and some common attitudes. For example, most of them have been through a liberal arts baccalaureate curriculum, have taken graduate degrees in the traditional disciplines or the established professions, and have taught full-time students in the central undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs of major institutions. It is not surprising, then, that when they think of colleges and students, they think first of the ones with which they are most familiar.

And their thinking until fairly recently has been supported by numbers. The postwar bulge of students in established institutions were mostly full-time degree-seekers, even though they were older than was customary. The tidal wave of students (to use Ronald Thompson's term) of the late fifties and sixties were for the most part also full-time degree-seekers—or at least tried to be; and therefore, they came under the programs designed for the establishment majority.

At the same time, other potential students in increasing numbers asked institutions to help them, and the institutions—when they responded at all—replied by setting up extension centers, continuing education centers, workshops, and the whole panoply of programs represented in the comprehensive College of General Studies.

But these were always add-ons. An add-on is the first to be dropped in a pinch, or is asked to pay more of its own way or more than its own way. Although the deans of extension said the add-on status was unfair and improper, the establishment really didn't listen in spite of occasionally giving polite attention.

One reason the establishment didn't listen was that the argument of continuing educators was: We are doing just what you are doing, and therefore we should get a share of the pie proportional to the numbers of students we serve. This argument was really a political phony, because if extension was doing what the establishment was doing, then it had no uniqueness; but uniqueness was its claim to support for sometimes very unconventional programs.

But now, suddenly, we hear the establishment beginning to sound like extension when it was claiming uniqueness. Here, for example, is Harold Howe of the Ford Foundation: "Learning should not be limited to the classroom, to the so-called college-age student, or to the campus, and the teaching faculty of colleges can include many persons not usually appointed to professorships." Howe's new vision was worth $400,000 to the "University Without Walls."

Have Harold Howe and his colleagues Baskin, Pifer,

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Nyquist, and Boyer suddenly taken on the forms of Thurman White, Alex Charters, Andre de Porry, and other leaders in extension?

I think not.

How does continuing education differ from what the establishment is now pushing?

Continuing education was designed for only two of the functions of institutions: instruction and validation. With a very few exceptions, it did not pretend to take over certification (or recognition). Therefore it had no graduates. College graduates belonged to someone else. Those of its students who eventually graduated were grateful to the certifying agency, not the instructional agency. And, as if to confirm its students' notion of where gratitude is owed, continuing education usually buddied-up to the parent college and seldom challenged it for fear of losing what little support it got. For example, typically the CGS, having found a competent instructor without the usual credentials, did not insist that the disciplinary department prove its case when it said he was incompetent to teach a course with their label. Nor typically did it really put much effort into developing *better* programs than often were standard on its campus, and force a curriculum committee to face the fact that they were better. Instead, typically, the CGS accepted the role of second best that the establishment gave it.

A potential student today might better put his chips on the establishment rather than on continuing education. He might say, "The establishment may be conservative but they're accustomed to success and their programs already lead to degrees, so I'm surer to succeed with them than with those who haven't developed much clout."

It seems that what is needed now, as we part from tradition, is not simply an extension of extension. To discover what we do need, we must ask and answer two questions:

1. What characteristics of students make conventional certification models as they now operate unsatisfactory?
2. Can the special needs of students not now well served be met by the further development and modification of traditional models?

To illustrate and explore these questions, we will use a population that many extension centers have served over the years and consider their special property, one that has been neglected by the establishment: military personnel in service. After setting up some problems faced by such servicemen, we can speculate about how the problems would fare under some of the proposals that are being made for external degrees, universities without walls, and so on.

SERGEANT X AND THE WORLD OF LEARNING

Sgt. X, for purposes of this illustration, is Regular Army, plans to retire after twenty years, and would like to have both the knowledge necessary for a college-level job and the college degree that goes with it, so that he can move from Army to civilian life with no unnecessary delays. He is now in his fifth year of service, has time to study and attend classes *provided* they are held in off-duty hours nearby, and can pay reasonable tuition even if the Army doesn't do it for him. He can expect to be on at least five different posts before retirement, two of them outside the United States. What might an educational adviser, who feels Sgt. X has the motivation and capacity for at least a bachelor's degree, see as X's potential difficulties?

If the adviser were an optimist, he might see none, because on the surface all the pieces appear to be in place to get Sgt. X both his intruction and certification well within fifteen years.

For example: Through extension divisions, hundreds of institutions offered thousands of college-level courses near or on military bases here and overseas in 1970. In addition, apart from courses, X has available national examinations that are variously recognized for credit. If he hasn't taken Advanced Placement Program work in high school to offer for credit, he can still take College-Level Examination Program exams in the basic studies and twenty-seven special subjects, which will be recognized in some form by 600 institutions. In addition, he can take USAFI correspondence courses for credit, and the New York State Department of Education College-Level Exams; and through the efforts of the American Council on Education's Commission on the Accreditation of Service Experiences, he can even get credit for some of his training courses taken in service.

Clearly, there is an embarrassment of riches here available, and the optimist will rejoice.

But the pessimist will be prepared to discover that X's chances of getting his degree are about one in fifty under present arrangements. First, the sergeant will sometimes be stationed where courses, or courses in what he needs for his program, are not available on the base or nearby. Second, in some instances, the courses will exist but will not be open to him because he doesn't have the time available when the courses are offered, or he is thought not to have the prerequisites, or he is not eligible because he's not a full-time student or because he doesn't meet the offering institution's overall admission standards.

Because he is really interested in learning something, rather than in attending class at a particular time or place, he might be expected to figure out nonclassroom ways to learn: independent study, correspondence study, reading in a library, instruction by a friend, apprenticeship (even in the military), or signing up with an enterprising proprietary school with an unconventional program. Assuming that he does learn, with luck he will have the chance to take CLEP exams on his base or at one of sixty regional centers every month.

Let us say that in the first five years of study, by luck and hard work, he has accumulated the equivalent of the spread component of a bachelor of arts and the introductory courses for a major.

This credit is scattered and not all is in "final" form, if that's the term. X took and passed eighteen hours of lower-

division breadth courses offered near his military stations by two institutions. He has a grade of 5 on the APP American History test for which some institutions will give six hours of credit. He has reasonably good grades on the entire CLEP battery of general exams, worth thirty hours in some institutions and sixty in others. He has completed a service course for which CASE recommends six hours of credit in statistics. And now what does X do?

Conventionally, he must complete a major. Conventionally, the major program is established by each department of each institution, and often differs according to the views of individual professors. And conventionally, each institution requires at least one year—or thirty semester hours—of "residence" just prior to the granting of the degree, "residence" defined as taking *our* courses with *our* departmental faculty. (Curiously, in some instances, residence may *not* include work with our institution's own extension division faculty.)

What real options does X's adviser see open for him?

1. X might best decide to postpone getting the degree until the end of the twenty years of service, and then plan on linking the last thirty hours of courses so they will not be interrupted by a change of station. One problem here is that the institution may very well decide that some of the earlier credits are "too old" to be counted. Another, of course, is that going six or eight years without instruction in order to meet a residence requirement is ridiculous.

2. As an alternative, Sgt. X might just flub along, taking whatever is available, and hope that at some point *some* institution will give him a degree for it, even though the mixture may be a peculiar one.

3. X could abandon the idea of a major and take one of the Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies programs, like that of SUNY at Brockport, even though it may not help him toward the goal he originally set.

4. He could change his job plans to work toward an occupation that doesn't require a degree.

TINKERING WITH THE SYSTEM

Now we have X in a nice pickle. How might some of the recently adopted or proposed plans have helped him or help him now? Before reviewing these, what—in abstract terms—are the hang-ups?

The hang-ups appear not because the present system *could not* work for X, but that it *does not.* The hang-ups are these:

1. There is no common curriculum for the whole B.A. program applicable to all degree-granting institutions. Most are alike in the lower-division work for the B.A., but they are unlike—and pride themselves on individuality—at the level of the major. Thus, specifications for the major for Sgt. X at Institution A will almost inevitably be changed if he turns to Institution B.

2. There are no common quality standards. Performance (for example, on a CLEP subject exam) acceptable for six hours at Institution A may get 3, 0, or 9 hours at Institution B. Thus, "credits" are not "credits" until they have been accepted by the institution that will award the degree. And experience tells us that institutions are very reluctant to accept transfer of full credit.

3. Residence limitations block the transfer of credit. When one moves to a new state, he may take a driver's test the same day and, if he passes it, get a license to drive. As long as he can pass the test, the state doesn't care where he learned how to drive. The analogy is not perfect, but application of the principle of residency seems to say that only instruction by a New York driver-trainer can prepare a good driver, and that no one is to get a New York license without it.

These three hang-ups—the lack of common curriculum, lack of common degree standards, and the individualistic residence requirements—are an inevitable result of the diversity of the American educational system which has grown out of very divergent origins. Most of the institutions established before 1900 were set up for exclusionary or sectarian purposes, which would have been ill-served by a national standard. But as Harold Hodgkinson has pointed out, in the past ten years, our institutions have not only multiplied in number and grown in size, but they have also become much more alike. Yesterday's teachers college is today's State University at A, no different from the next county's State University at B—*except* when it is a matter of curriculum, degree standards, and transfer of B's credit.

Now let's go back to Sgt. X with his mixed bag of credits and almost credits, his peripatetic job, and his desire to get a degree. What modifications or developments (if any) of our traditional system can benefit him?

There are four points at which we might get at the system to modify it: instruction, examination, transfer of credit, and certification.

Instruction

For example, if Sgt. X finds that there is no conventional instructional program in his major available to him on or near his base, what can be done about it? Institutions and other organizations could make it possible for him to learn in ways other than the traditional classroom ways: TV, apprenticeship, correspondence, rented video cassettes, etc.

Many of the newer proposals concentrate on developing unconventional ways of learning for students for whom the conventional ways are limiting. Britain's new "Open University" uses radio, TV, correspondence materials, local learning centers, and periodic seminars. The University Without Walls contemplates learning on the job, in travel, and by exposure to faculty with unconventional qualifications. In fact, of course, such proposals do encounter limits of flexibility because our conception of a learning program requires that it incorporate some definition of what is to be learned, what must be studied or experienced, who is to assist, and a period of time within which these elements are to be brought together. Thus, we set limits to how "unconventional" a learning program can be.

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Validation

There are no limits as such imposed on Sgt. X that govern what he may learn outside a conventional learning program. And so we get to the second element in the equation that we might tinker with—the validation of learning. Here a number of steps have been taken and others are proposed.

Validation means both examinations and the symbols given to satisfactory exam performance. It is the symbols that give trouble in X's case because of lack of agreement about what they stand for.

For example, a grade of 5 on an Advanced Placement Program exam in American History means superior performance in a conventional—and conventionally taught—beginning college history course given in a high school. The level of performance is judged against national norms.

A good grade on the CLEP American History exam represents the same material but does not say that the student has taken a course. It says only that by national norms he has mastered the material. He may have learned it sitting in the public library, or traveling the country, or from his grandfather, or by long and diligent independent study.

In tinkering with the examination system, it's worth reminding ourselves of a trap easily fallen into when talking of national examinations: the assumption that the grades given in the first course in American history in our 2,500 colleges and universities mean the same thing, and that we need be suspicious only of APP or CLEP grades. In fact, of course, we can count on far more consistency among CLEP grades than among the grades from any two randomly selected institutions. Nevertheless, a defender of the present system who is against modification usually attacks the exam he didn't give rather than looking at his own practices critically.

Two approaches to making the examination system more flexible are now being proposed. The first is to increase the number of topics for which exams are devised and administered: for example, CLEP is now preparing exams in Afro-American history and medical technology, and is considering the problems involved in pencil-and-paper testing of the laboratory sciences. The other approach requires that we devise some form of exam for testing qualities which in the past we have judged by observation: maturity, openness to change, readiness for certain occupations. Examining and grading these "affective" qualities with the same reliability we expect in testing cognitive knowledge and skills poses such difficult problems that it is not surprising that the examination components of the new programs discussed below are conventional in testing what has always been tested in academic programs.

Transfer of Credit

The third place where the system might be modified to assist Sgt. X is transfer of credit, regardless of whether the credit is earned by taking instruction and an examination in one institution, or is simply an exam grade.

Those who have learned and had their learning validated by what they have been led to believe are recognized experts find it very hard to understand why all institutions do not recognize their accomplishments in the same way and at the same quantitative level. Particularly inexplicable are those cases in which one element of an institution (e.g., the College of Arts and Sciences) refuses to accept earned credit from another (e.g., the College of General Studies), or those in which a State College will not accept all college transfer program credits from its system's junior colleges.

What Sgt. X runs into is usually somewhat different: the unwillingness of an institution to accept for full credit the evaluations of another institution, or of even the most carefully prepared national exams, despite the years of persuasion and negotiation that have gone into establishing principles and procedures for the transfer of such credit.

Those who are impatient at the prospect of still more years of negotiation before Sgt. X can be accommodated now propose that there be created a new institution which, under its charter, would be empowered to accept all credits at face value. For Sgt. X, such a national credit-bank and clearinghouse would seem to be the perfect solution to his problems. Instead of having to persuade the faculty of the college near his base that his credits are good, at the other end of a 6-cent stamp is an institution that has already accepted them, and all he has to do is . . . .

But even Sgt. X will agree that his degree program should be more than a miscellaneous collection of credits and that he therefore needs some advice about what he should study to complete work for the certificate. He would probably agree, too, that the institution that awards the certificate should be the one to advise Sgt. X about the content of the program. Two models of such institutions have been proposed.

The better publicized model is that of the Regents of the University of the State of New York, which proposes to grant degrees on the basis of examinations—several kinds of examinations, not simply their own, as is the case with the University of London.

Less well known is the plan of Westbrook College in Portland, Maine, which has been operating as a women's junior college, awarding the A.A. Westbrook now will award the B.A. in a program under which its graduates, advised (for $250) by its own faculty, will register in other accredited institutions to acquire suitable upper-division credits which Westbrook will guarantee in advance to accept.

But there is a curiosity about the New York and Westbrook models in that both are already authorized to give degrees at the bachelor's level *even though they do not have a faculty or an instructional program* for these degrees.

Certification

The fourth element in the conventional pattern that might be modified to help Sgt. X is the certifying agency.

Although the cases of the New York Regents and Westbrook are unique and based on historical accident, never-

theless, in a peripatetic society, and with more of the working population deciding they want college-level education, there will be very great pressures to establish Regents and Westbrook models where they are not now available. Opposition to creating certifying institutions without faculty and instructional programs will be bolstered by experience in states such as Florida where lax chartering of educational organizations has fostered a flourishing diploma-mill industry.

To date the most comprehensive proposal for a new certifying agency without a teaching program is that of Jack N. Arbolino and John R. Valley, of CEEB and ETS respectively, for a National University established, perhaps, by an act of Congress (*Continuing Education,* October 1970, p. 6). Here are eleven functions its authors propose for it:

[1] It would award degrees in its own name, . . . based solely on examinations.
[2] It would jointly, with Participating Colleges, award degrees.
[3] It would accredit college-level instruction offered outside the colleges and universities [as CASE does with military programs].
[4] It would help students who wish to transfer.
[5] It would encourage the development of all instructional resources.
[6] It would maintain records of individual educational accomplishment.
[7] It would provide an educational counseling and referral service for individuals.
[8] It would provide an advisory and consulting service on education for employers.
[9] It would maintain a program of research and development supportive of continuing education.
[10] It would provide the examinations and the other instruments and services necessary to the implementation of the National University.
[11] It would maintain an active forum including publications devoted to the development of continuing education.

It is worth noting that there are in existence right now at least 100 comprehensive universities that perform in some fashion every one of these functions, and probably many more than 100. So what is unique? The uniqueness lies in the National University having no faculty or instructional program. But it has everything else: counseling of students, record-keeping, examinations, and the all-important authority to award the degree.

And if Sgt. X's academic problems arise only out of his inability to present himself for instruction by one institution, for him the clear solution is the National University.

But is it?

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In essence, our traditional practices in American higher education can, without much change, be modified to make acquiring a college degree almost as simple a matter for Sgt. X, who cannot conform to conventions of time and place, as for the full-time resident student. The National University model seems to be the handiest and quickest way to accomplish the desired modifications. But some nontrivial questions have been lurking in the background that have implications for not going as far as the National University—or going much further. For example: Will Sgt. X be satisfied with the pure National University degree once he has it? Will he insist that he must have a joint degree with a participating college that has a "name"? Or will he see it to his advantage to fight—as he has had to do thus far—to get an already prestigious college to be as generous as the National University so that he may work for its degree?

These questions open a can of worms, for they ask what the certificate Sgt. X is working for really means. One worm involves our recognition that we value a degree from a selective, elite institution more highly than one from Podunk, and we transfer our opinion of a graduate's degree to our estimate of his abilities. Yet in the light of recent research by Alexander Astin and others, we should be as wary of assuming such differences of ability as we are careful not to equate the two degrees.

Another of the worms derives from the conventional claim that the degree represents the personal attention of the faculty member to the student, not only when he instructs him in class but also when he examines and signs his academic program, when he approves transfer credit, and when he and his department agree that the student should be given the degree. But in most of our medium and large institutions, advising for the first two years of a baccalaureate is done by a catalog in which the required program is the least common denominator of the opinions of a 25-person curriculum committee sitting fifteen years ago; advising on the major is idiosyncratic and, in any individual case, represents a number of compromises with academic principles (e.g., afternoon football practice controls the courses taken for the major); transfer credit is granted by a clerk in the admissions office; and graduation simply follows the accumulation of credits and payment of fees.

If it could be proved that the graduate of an institution that does *not* indulge in these practices is better educated than the graduate from one that does, one might build a strong case for reasserting the desirability of increased faculty control and a case against the National University and other nonfaculty models. But is there anyone bold and informed enough to propose a qualitative ranking of the three-quarter-million bachelor and first professional graduates in June 1969 on the basis of the extent to which faculty decided the content of individual programs, the amount of transfer credit, and the award of individual degrees?

The problem in thinking about modifications of traditional patterns is where to draw a reasonable line between gross measures on the one hand and nit-picking discriminations on the other. Opponents of any relaxation of requirements regularly cite requirements for the certification of physicians in

which, it is assumed, picking nits is really a necessary protection for the patient. But even here, it is very easy to slip into making all requirements for certification equally important when of course they are not.

One way to avoid the problems of deciding what a degree means is to abolish entirely the certification of educational accomplishment by educational agencies. A nice model for this is the public library, which says, "We do not screen our users to be sure that they will understand the books we lend them, and we do not certify that they have read or understood the books they withdrew." The model would restrict the educational institution to providing instruction; certification and licensing would be left to employers and government. The model does not challenge seriously the notion that certificates are necessary, practically and psychologically, and someone should give them.

Still another way to handle the problems we now have in deciding what degrees mean is to try for a nationwide redefinition of the conventional degrees, so that the B.A. means graduation from a four-year, liberal arts, residential program and does not mean all the other things it is now awarded for. Practically, this won't work: with so many nonstandard B.A.'s around now, it is much too late to change the name of the game. Yet another alternative would be to multiply vastly the symbols well beyond what the Carnegie Commission proposed (a degree for the equivalent of every two years), and make them in far smaller sizes, so that some might be awarded for a two-week course, others for an exam, others for a conventional year's program. The active student would over time collect an impressive quantity of these, like military medals, with which he could dazzle employers and inflate his ego. A real advantage of this approach is that it would help to untie the student from the age-based system he is now in or—if he is not—suffers from not being in. If the building blocks are small enough, they can be accumulated when needed. And we could thus also get away from some of the hazards of the degree-or-nothing tradition which gives the world so many human beings we call dropouts.

THE SINGLE INSTITUTION AND SERGEANT X

Do we have to revolutionize the patterns of higher education to accommodate Sergeant X? After all, he's competent, will work, and all he wants is the chance to learn and a degree certifying his competence. Is there nothing existing institutions could do for him now? Let us look at two possibilities, both of which would provide an *internal degree* to Sgt. X as an *external* (or nonresident, or extramural) *student.*

The first possibility is to modify the institution so as to offer to external students those services Arbolino and Valley propose for the National University but without, of course, abolishing the institution's regular programs for resident students. What must the institution consider in taking such a step, and what will be the likely consequences?

If the institution is the only one in a very large area that offers the National University kinds of services and degrees, it is likely that it will be absolutely swamped by demands for its services: record-keeping, examining, investigating, authenticating, certifying. England's Open University had 43,000 applicants for 25,000 places in its first go-round. Its first-year budget is $16 million.

Even if the institution should be the first in its area, it is not likely that the pioneer institution will remain the only one to move into degrees for nonresidents. And thus there is another set of consequences to be considered. For if it is not a very prestigious institution and a prestigious local competitor offers pretty much the same thing in services, credit, and degrees, the pioneer may very well find itself without enough takers to make the effort economically feasible.

Far more important to the lesser institution is the real possibility that the students who now put up with four years of its brand of education in order to get a degree may find that the nonresident features of another institution's degrees are far more palatable and leave the lesser college without students at all. Delightful as the faculty has always said this would be, the college will spiral gracefully down through the overcast to its demise.

The death of some institutions is a likely consequence of making others more responsive to the legitimate needs of Sgt. X and those with his problems. Individual institutions may therefore seek an alternative to adopting all the features of the National University model. One such alternative may be to reverse the trend of institutions to become more and more alike and to reestablish institutional specialization while becoming more generous in transferring credit. The two things must happen simultaneously, however, if they are to work.

Envisage, for example, an institution offering a B.A. with a specialty in fine arts. It teaches classes in painting, sculpture, and print-making on its own campus. It refuses to teach physics and chemistry; but because it requires achievement in the subjects for its degree, it has arranged for its students to take the required work elsewhere and transfer the credit. It may even go so far as to give a degree with a major in art to a student who has never shown up for anything but counseling. His studio work would have been done in other art schools and evaluated there, or in the studios of a practicing artist or in the workrooms of a commercial art establishment where the student is on the job, with evaluation conducted by the degree-granting institution.

If a model of the specialized institution is accepted, then what about its extension: the institution that teaches but does not give a degree, on the grounds that the degree-seeker will transfer credit from this institution to another? With this suggestion we have completed the circle back to the National University model which, to fulfill some of its functions, requires the existence of learning opportunities apart from the offering of degrees.

Degrees for Nontraditional Students

SGT. X, BILLY KOWALSKI, MRS. SMITH, AND OTHERS

The March-April 1971 issue of *Change* carries an article entitled "Billy Kowalski Goes to College," described as "the first in a series on the non-elite student." According to a headnote, Billy is one of a "new kind of college student, variously called 'non-elite,' 'ethnic,' 'disadvantaged,' or, simply, non-collegiate." Elsewhere in the same issue of *Change* are "England's Open University: Revolution at Milton Keynes" and a research report, "Open Admissions and Academic Quality."

Together these remind us that the analysis of Sgt. X's problems offered here by no means exhausts the subject. In fact, Sgt. X is not really much of a challenge to higher education in spite of the inability of the establishment to accommodate him. He was deliberately introduced as being academically competent, able to pay for his education, and having no cultural conflicts with the purposes and methods of traditional education. And yet he is ordinarily treated as an unwelcome mendicant at the institutional gates.

Whatever other studies may be undertaken as higher education gropes for new models, the study of Sgt. X suggests that the examination should be extended to the "ethnic" Billy Kowalski, to Mrs. Smith (returning to college after twenty years and three children), to the veteran from Vietnam, to the professional requiring retraining for a new job when NASA funds are cut, and to a multitude of other real students. We may anticipate that many of them might be well served through relatively simple adjustments in provisions for learning, validation, transfer of credit, and certification. For others, no model yet invented will serve. But the exercise itself may stimulate the necessary invention.

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